**DO GIVE IT A READ- BDM CAPSTONE PROJECT**

A few days back I saw a post on discourse where a few students initiated a thread, should the BDM project be changed? (Thread: https://discourse.onlinedegree.iitm.ac.in/t/should-bdm-project-be-changed/74069)

While I responded to all the queries on this, it made me post another thread (Thread: https://discourse.onlinedegree.iitm.ac.in/t/i-heard-from-my-seniors-capstone-is-very-hard-and-should-be-changed-well-i-don-t-think-so-here-is-why/74115)

Healthy discussion is always needed and that's how you sort out things. However, making claims and then stating that they were mere opinions which could be true/ false, is not something that is advisable. Why? It just creates more confusion and wastage of productive time, part of which could have been utilized for the BDM Capstone project.

Now let me explain to you with an example the practical significance of doing a project and how it helps businesses.

**Note:** The purpose of this case is to give students an understanding of how Capstone projects helps businesses if done effectively. Views are based on my personal observations and interactions with the business owner.

Here is a case of Vijayrams Coffee (VC) and how this small business managed to be a hit in one of the most crowded areas, where there was tough competition!

VC started their business in 1975 (https://vijayaramcoffee.business.site/) in T Nagar and is a family business (Run by an elderly man and his son Senthil). They have 2 outlets in T Nagar.

I stayed in T Nagar between Jul 2020 to Nov 2020 and that is how I got to personally know Senthil.

While Senthil's father sits in VC for an hour or two, given his age, it is Senthil who popularized the outlet and manages the show. You will see at least 15 shops in and around the vicinity of VC, selling the same tea, coffee, and snacks, but VC remains always crowded. This kind of tells us that a point of difference exists in VC, which other shops perhaps lagged. His pricing was more than others (marginally, assuming that majority customers are price sensitive), but despite that

customers saw value. So, I was naturally curious to find this out, given that I research in the domain of Sales and Marketing.

Link to VC Instagram Page: https://www.instagram.com/vijayaramcoffee/?hl=en

Senthil is a crowd puller and would always make it a point to connect with a new customer. While he greets all his customers and knows most of them by name, he makes sure new customers are attended and given a v good experience.

The outcome: **Customer Satisfaction→ Loyalty→ Behavioral Intentions (High purchase frequency, word of mouth etc.).** Happy customers become the unpaid salesforce for the business, they share their experiences and get in new people too.

He focused on long term relationships than transactional ones! Which the others couldn't imitate.

He always made it a point to ask customers the feedback and incorporated them. This place was patronized by everyone for various reasons:

1. Did not sell any tobacco related products.
2. Introduced wafer biscuit coffee which is a hit.
3. Kept only those items in stock, which he felt would move and add value (Puff, Sundal (Boiled Pulses), cutlets, mini samosas, Lassi, Buttermilk etc. Maintained consistent stocks irrespective of variation in demand.
4. While he did start with sandwiches, it gave him good business at first, the sales came down at some point of time and he phased it out slowly.
5. Introduced mini coffees for Rs. 10/- and that got him more customers. He knew every trick in the book that would drive sales.
6. Knew the immense power of social media. He invited popular vloggers, and this gave him a lot of publicity (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jWWdj3rEUnU)
7. More importantly, he took feedback seriously and never compromised on quality.
8. And the list goes on……

Thus, he managed both customer acquisition and retention parallelly and successfully. So, wondering what's new in this? This is how you run a business and it's the point of difference that gives the business a competitive advantage in the market.

You see he had all the data of products he sold. And he made use of this to make decisions and that helped him drive sales. That's the very reason I mentioned that data science is not just numbers, it's beyond it. This project helps you explain what, why, how, when and where components, which perhaps the numbers may not explain effectively. So, it's not a market researchproject as someone stated, it's beyond that! ◆

**Image Source**: Instagram Page of VC
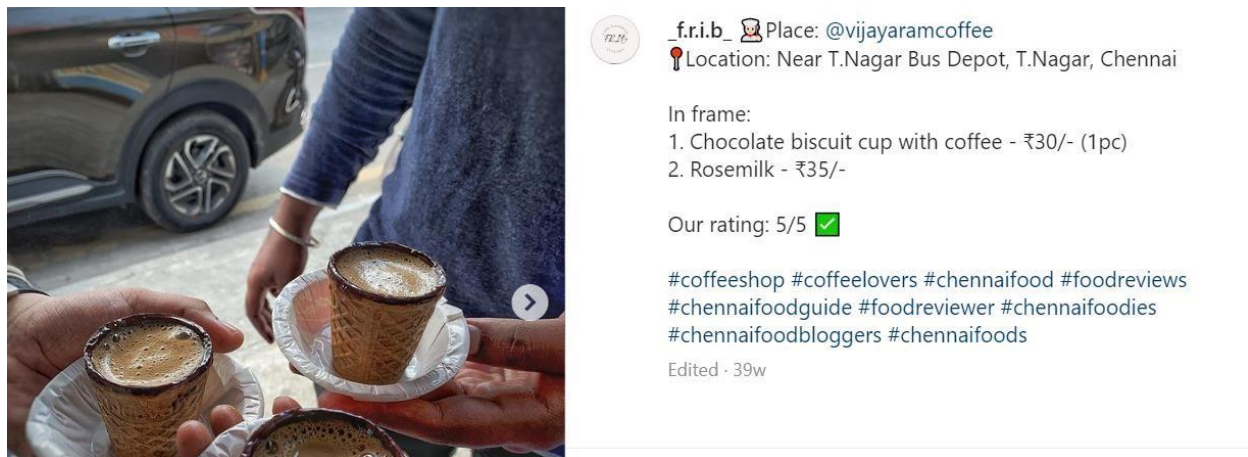




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